



# India: Teachings from Within

George BareFood Georgiou



# *India*

## *Teachings from Within*

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But for any act done with the intention of honoring and spreading the work, my heart remains open.

This journey isn't just mine.

It's yours too, if you choose to carry it with you.

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## Dedicated...

*To those with whom I walked this journey, sharing moments, glances, and silences, and to those who will travel through these pages, along a path filled with scents, contrasts, experiences, thoughts, and above all, filled with realizations and lessons. This brief text is not a "chronicle of events."*

*It is the imprint of emotions, reflections, and inner journeys born as I walked alongside you throughout this voyage.*

*Each page reflects my own personal perspective and perception of the events and situations we lived — whether accurate or flawed.*

*It does not attempt to capture every experience or every person.*

*Nor does it seek to narrate an "objective" story, but simply to share what I personally felt. It was never written to judge — neither people nor circumstances — but rather to bear witness to a gaze striving first to observe, to feel, and to understand itself, and then others.*

*If, while reading, you find moments that resonate with you, or recognize emotions you too have felt, I will be deeply glad.*

*But if you encounter parts that feel unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or even provoke disagreement, that too is perfectly fine.*

*I kindly ask you to see them as my own inner reflections, not as judgments.*

*Each of us carries a unique gaze, just as each life experience is unrepeatably unique. And that is something truly beautiful.*

*The journey was shared by all, but the way each of us lived remains precious and different.*

*Thank you all.*

*For the companionship, the conversations, the experiences, the smiles, and the silences.*

*For the traces we left together — both in the world and within ourselves.*

*Because without you, this journey would never have been written — not within me, nor on paper.*

*With these thoughts, I invite you to walk through the following pages — not as mere readers, but as fellow travelers.*

*With respect and gratitude,*

*George (George BareFood Georgiou)*

## Foreword

I didn't set out on this journey to write a book.

I set out to discover India.

Or so I thought...

Because in the end, India discovered me first.

It looked me in the eye, surrounded me with color, contrast, glances and silences.

It didn't ask if I was ready. It didn't warn me.

It simply began to show me.

And I... began to see.

This book is not a guide. It's not an analysis.

It's not an attempt to explain a world.

It's a collection of moments that changed me.

It's teachings without a teacher — moments that force you to reflect, not because you have to, but because you can't forget them.

If, while reading this, you feel — even just for a moment — that you traveled, noticed, or were moved, then the book has served its purpose.

Not to show you India.

But to remind you of something in yourself.

With all my heart,

*Happy reading.*

*Happy meeting.*

*George BareFood Georgiou*

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## Namaste – The First Glance

I'm not a morning person. And yet, the sunrise over Delhi found me as if life itself had kept me up all night — full of fatigue, quirks, and that quiet unease of someone heading somewhere unknown.

It was my first time traveling with a group. Thirteen strangers — companions on a shared, yet completely different journey.

The first image of India wasn't landscapes or temples. It was contrast: trash and flowers, honking horns and smiling faces, cows and tuk-tuks, suffocating heat and blasting air conditioning. Uncomfortable and beautiful — all at once.

We were on a small bus, yet I felt as if we were passing through a gate into another world. Not exactly a *magical* world — but certainly a *different* one.

Namaste, everyone said — and it wasn't just polite. It was an invitation:

“You are here. Welcome. Look.”

And I looked. I looked and tried to understand.

But the more I looked, the more I realized:

India is not to be *understood*.

It is to be felt.

## Roads without collision

The city woke up with noise. Not just sounds — *ritual noise*. Endless honking, relentless and raw. Motorbikes, cars, tuk-tuks, bicycles, carts pulled by animals — all together, all at once. No traffic lights, no logic, no rules... and yet, no accidents.

“To drive in Delhi,” our guide said, “you need three things: good brakes, a loud horn... and plenty of luck.” I laughed. Then I stopped.

Because in that chaos, there was a strange kind of flow. No one seemed angry. No one shouted. Everyone just kept going, crossing paths momentarily before continuing their routes.

No one was trying to dominate. No one fought for the right of way.

It felt like watching a living metaphor for life:

Each person moving at their own speed, in their own vehicle, toward their own destination. They meet, cross, separate and somehow... they don't collide.

If you think about it... isn't that how human coexistence *should* be?

Maybe that's the most surprising lesson: **chaos isn't always a problem.**

Sometimes, it's organic. Sometimes, it is necessary.

And maybe, if we stop demanding everything be in order... we might just find our own place *within* the chaos.

## Eyes on the Street

We stopped for food at a restaurant with a private hall booked for us.  
As we exit, they're already there — women holding babies, dusty faces, tiny hands reaching out.  
They don't speak. They just look.  
And in their gaze, they say what no one dares to say aloud.  
"Don't give them anything," says the guide.  
"More will come."  
It sounds logical. Maybe even protective.  
But something about it doesn't sit right.  
The children stare into us — as if asking:  
*Where did you come from? And why am I here?*  
I say nothing. Because I don't have an answer.  
For a moment, I imagine myself in their place.  
I am not that child — but I *could* have been.  
Do we choose where we're born? Is it just luck?  
Is what we call "normal" simply a gift — one we didn't earn, but inherited?  
And if so..., what do we owe those who didn't get it?  
How much guilt can a conscience carry when it sees, but cannot give — or doesn't know if it should?  
I realize the question isn't whether to give or not to give.  
The real danger is becoming indifferent.  
To grow used to others needs.  
To become blind to poverty, to injustice, to desperation.  
Because when that happens...  
you don't just lose your humanity —  
you lose your *capacity* to feel it.



## A Foreign Joy Dressed in Yellow

Back at the hotel.

Suddenly—chaos. Drums, music, voices, dancing.

The wedding has begun!

Yellow everywhere — in the fabric, in the flowers, in the faces.

We step into another world almost by accident —

a world that doesn't wait for the perfect moment to celebrate,  
but creates one. Right there. Wherever it is.

They welcome us with open arms. They pull us into the dance.

No one cares if we know the steps — joy has no protocol.

We take photos, we smile, we lose ourselves in the current of the moment.

And yet... something inside me resists.

I still carry the weight of that child's gaze from the street.

Maybe just a few blocks away.

Or maybe... just outside the party.

How can poverty and celebration exist side by side,  
without one canceling the other out?

Perhaps because this country doesn't choose.

It doesn't hide the dark to show the light — it lays them both bare.

And says:

There is no clean answer.

Only raw experience.

So, for a few minutes, I feel like I belong.

Not as a tourist.

But as a person who sees life not as they wish it were,  
but as it truly is:

**full of contradictions, of feasts and wounds.**

*Sometimes, love is marble.*  
*Sometimes, a prison with a view of it.*  
*And sometimes... just a memory.*  
*But always, it longs to remain.*

## **The Window of Shah Jahan**

The bus stops.  
We stand outside the Agra Fort — the Red Fort.  
It's named for the red sandstone that gleams under the sun like a wall on fire.  
We step inside, and the guide's voice breaks the silence of the centuries:  
"Here is where Shah Jahan spent his last years, imprisoned by his own son.  
And from that window, he looked out every day at the Taj Mahal —  
the tomb of his beloved."  
I stand there, in that same spot.  
I see it across the river, distant, yet clear.  
White. Still. Like a ghost.  
Like a promise that lived on  
while the one who made it withered in captivity across the shore.  
On one side, a symbol of eternal love.  
On the other, a symbol of human tragedy.  
Two monuments. One gaze.  
And between them — time.  
Relentless. Silent. All-powerful.  
I walk through the empty halls of the fort.  
I feel the grandeur that once was — and the loss that followed.  
History is not fair. Life is not always fair.  
But there's a strange comfort in knowing that love  
survived envy, power, and time.

Perhaps that is Shah Jahan's greatest monument:  
not the building of the Taj Mahal itself,  
but the depth of feeling that inspired it —  
so deep that it still moves hearts today.

## **Between Prices and Pricelessness**

We leave the fort.  
The sun blazes overhead.  
The street overflows with people.  
Vendors approach — children, young men, elders.  
They shout prices like they're performing:  
"1000 – 600 – 300 – 100!"  
A relentless bazaar.  
Voices crash against you, wrap around you.  
They sell stone elephants, scarves, magnets — anything you can imagine and  
anything you can't.  
I'm told to ignore them.  
That I don't need what they're selling.  
But it's not about needing.  
It's about existing.  
They're there.  
They see you.  
They insist.  
They try.  
For a few rupees.  
For a piece of bread.  
For a sliver of dignity.

I feel anger.  
Not at them — at the system.  
At the fact that, to sell something, they must pressure.  
To survive, they must make you feel something guilt, obligation, negotiation.  
And I wonder:  
Is it a necessity or a habit?  
Is it a way of survival or a way of life?  
And who am I to judge?  
I decide not to buy anything.  
Not out of arrogance but because I feel that if I enter this game,  
I might lose something deeper:  
my sincerity.  
My intention.  
My freedom to give — when I *feel*, not when I'm pressed.  
But I leave carrying weight.  
Not bags.  
Just questions.  
Something heavier than a souvenir.

## **Journeys on the Soul's Bus**

Somewhere between Agra and Jaipur, the bus rolls on, and the conversation begins—unplanned, unstructured.  
We talk about Blue Light, energy healing, kundalini, psychology.  
Freud. Jung. *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*.  
And somewhere in there... me.  
I find myself wondering — what do I want?  
Why do I want to become a psychologist, a writer , an educator ?



The conversation drifts toward usefulness, toward offering something meaningful.

Everyone says they want to contribute.

Yet beneath the words, a deeper thread emerges:  
the craving for meaning.

The landscape changes, and so do we.

Thoughts deepen. I wonder:

Are we really that different after all?

Or are we just different facets of the same collective self,  
as Jung might have said?

In this part of the journey, the words flow effortlessly.

The best ideas, it seems, don't come when you search for them.

They arrive when you share.

A fleeting idea plants itself in my mind:

a place to offer, An orphanage. A care home. A school. An animal shelter.

A sanctuary for all souls waiting to be seen.

Nothing is clear yet.

But the spark is there.

Somewhere between dreams and dialogues, we reach Jaipur.

And I find myself thinking:

Maybe life *is* a bus.

You talk. You observe. You reflect.

And somehow... you arrive.

Literally and metaphorically.

## The City That Turned Pink

We arrive in Jaipur.

Known as the “Pink City” — though it’s not really pink.

It’s a faded terracotta, somewhere between dust and sunlight,  
that under the setting sun transforms into something more imagined than  
seen.

The Prince of Wales and his companion guards were once impressed by it —  
not by the color itself, but by the *impression* of pink.

And so the impression became legend.

The legend, identity. The city is beautiful.

Beautiful in its own way.

Markets, jewelry, handmade clothes, ceramics — art everywhere.

Smells and voices blend together.

Its culture feels more cheerful, more colorful, more like a story  
than any other city we’ve seen.

It carries something regal,  
yet also something completely ordinary.

We walk.

We pause to admire the Palace of the Winds.

The day has been long.

We’re tired — from the constant waves of images and sounds  
that keep washing through us without pause.

## When the Heart Grows Still — A Spirituality Unknown

We step inside the Laxmi Narayan temple.

The ceremony begins soon.

Something changes immediately.

As if the air softens.

As if the world lowers its voice.

No one asks us to be quiet.

We simply feel it.

I stand still.

Goosebumps. Reverence.

And then, a question breaks into my mind — uninvited:

Why do I feel such peace here,

when other places of worship leave me cold?

Is my own faith wrong?

Or is it that “the unfamiliar” touches us more

because we haven’t worn it down with expectations?

I look around.

No one seems to be performing.

Everyone simply *is*.

Calm. Present. Humble.

I wonder if others feel the same.

Or am I the only one always searching for something deeper —

and moved when I stumble upon it by chance?

Maybe spirituality isn’t in the building.

Or even in belief.

Maybe it's in the gaze.  
The posture.  
The honesty with which you stand before the Unknown.  
And then everything lights up.  
Because...  
whatever you feel,  
if it rises from within,  
if it's born of honesty —  
then it cannot be wrong.

## **The Crossroads of Shame**

We head back into the city at night.  
We want to see it again and experience it differently.  
And it is different. Harsher.  
Dirt, markets, pungent smells, stray dogs, cows.  
Vendors, worn out, trying to sell the last of their goods so they can go home  
— if they have one.  
Some will simply lie down on the pavement.  
That *is* their home.  
We take a taxi to the main market area — for comfort.  
The car seems almost magical: it runs on barely any fuel.  
We laugh. We mention it to the driver.  
I don't know if he understands, but he smiles — and keeps weaving his head  
maneuvering through traffic, unbothered.  
On the way back, there are too many of us for one taxi.  
We haggle with tuk-tuk drivers for the best prices.  
The city slowly empties.



Strange-looking men linger nearby.  
Adrenaline. Fear.  
Or maybe... exaggeration?  
Maybe they're just looking at us — the same way we look at *them*, the  
“different”?  
We end up taking another taxi for safety  
Safety in chaos? Or so we think.  
Right before the intersection...  
We get stuck in traffic.  
In the middle of the night, cars swarming from all directions,  
a little girl knocks on our window.  
Unkempt, dirty, with eyes that don't beg — just point to her mouth.  
“I'm hungry,” they say.  
Don't say it. Show it. They'll understand.  
We don't open the window.  
We *know* better. Gangs, scams, exploitation...  
We've been warned.  
Maybe it's fake.  
Maybe someone sent her.  
Maybe it's real.  
Maybe it doesn't matter.  
I look to the left. Another car.  
A “normal” family. Clean clothes, a sense of safety.  
The father is saying something to the children.  
They listen carefully. They glance at him, then at the girl, then back again.  
Who knows what he's saying?  
To stay safe?  
To feel compassion?  
To be grateful for what they have?

And us? The adults?  
We do the easiest thing: we ignore. Stuck in traffic  
We don't want traffic to move so we can get home faster.  
We want it to move so we can escape her gaze.  
So we don't have to feel.  
So we don't have to carry the weight of our conscience.  
Eventually, the traffic clears.  
We reach the hotel. Safe!  
We lie down on clean sheets, under air conditioning and silence.  
Will I remember this girl?  
Will I do something?  
I don't know.  
But something inside me shifted.  
Even if just slightly.  
And I hope... for good.

## Invisible Walls and the "Mirror"

The caste system in India is an ancient social structure that classifies people into groups, mainly based on birth and occupation.

It originally emerged from religious tradition and was later woven into the country's social fabric.

In brief, there are four main castes:

- **Brahmins** – Priests, scholars, and teachers; considered the highest caste
- **Kshatriyas** – Warriors and rulers

- **Vaishyas** – Merchants, craftsmen, landowners
- **Shudras** – Laborers, servants, and skilled manual workers

Beyond these, there are the **Dalits**, the so-called "untouchables," who do not belong to any of the main categories.

They are traditionally assigned the "dirty" tasks — and even today, they are often treated as unwanted.

Although the Indian Constitution has officially abolished caste-based discrimination, in practice, the caste system persists in different forms:

Who you marry.

Who serves you.

Where you sit.

How you are spoken to.

And then you realize...

this is not just a "tradition."

It is something living, silent, yet deeply embedded in daily life — an invisible system of inequality that, even if abolished on paper, continues to shape people's lives.

I felt the weight of it when I suggested that the rest of our group share a meal at the restaurant with our driver and the guide's assistant.

The response was, "Company policy does not allow it."

Maybe it truly was company policy.

Or maybe, behind it, lingered an invisible line still dividing people today.

Even though I did not like it I complied with it feeling a little irritated. There were some moments when our guide stirred uncomfortable feelings within me.

Not through any explicit insult or action, but through small, almost imperceptible details — a glance, a tone of voice, a sense of distance.

I wondered:

Was it something of his?

Or something I projected onto him?

Was he from a different "caste"?

Or had I, unconsciously, placed him into one?

Was it his attitude — or my own expectations — that built an invisible wall between us?

As much as this discomfort lingered within me, I realized that what truly unsettled me was not him, but what was surfacing inside me:

the awkwardness of confronting roles, shapes, and prejudices I might be carrying without even knowing.

Perhaps, after all, he was just a mirror.

Showing me, without meaning to, how I perceive the "guide," the "local," the "employee," the "other."

And then I understood:

Caste systems are not only outside of us.

They exist within us, too —

as invisible hierarchies, silent roles, and mental structures we unconsciously build.

I am not seeking the right answers or interpretations.

All that matters to me is that I do not seal my heart.

Because if I close it, I will not only shut out him, or anyone else but everything else that the world still has to offer.

**And I did not travel so far only to remain closed.**



## At the Orphanage – The Touch That Could See

I didn't know what to expect from our scheduled visit to the orphanage.  
I hadn't thought about how I would feel.  
I usually feel awkward around children — their honesty tends to disarm me.  
The setting around us? Harsh. Everything minimal.  
Children without families — or with families who can't care for them.  
A simple space, neat but modest.  
Many children, just like all the children in the world, sitting in class with their teachers.  
Children without opportunities, but not without soul.  
After the welcome — which felt like something from another era —  
we were all a bit awkward at first.  
Then... came life. After all, they were just kids.  
Sweet smiles, eyes that looked at you without asking for anything.  
Just as children do when you give them a little space.  
They had prepared a small welcome. A song.  
A "thank you" that wasn't said in words.  
We sat beside them.  
We spoke through gestures, glances, silence.  
They didn't ask us anything — and told us everything.  
A little girl came and held my hand for no reason.  
*Just like that.*  
And I... didn't know whether she felt safe with me, or if I found comfort in her touch.  
A tiny hyperactive spark with a curious gaze.  
I thought she was shy, playing coy with all of us.  
Later I learned she was nearly blind.

And then I realized... it was her way of trying to "see" us.  
Her touch was her gaze.  
It was her way of saying:  
"You're here. I felt you."  
I sat next to a young boy for a photo.  
Just me and a boy, side by side.  
His gaze marked me.  
On his face, I saw a question.  
On mine — an attempt to answer.  
And perhaps... I couldn't.  
This isn't a photo for a frame.  
It's a photo for reflection.  
Because his gaze asked:  
"Now that you've seen me...  
what will you do with that?"  
And that is the simplest  
and most powerful question a child can ask you.  
I don't know if we gave anything to these children.  
If they'll remember us.  
But leaving, I felt we had received something important.  
A memory.  
A whisper that said:  
Do something.  
Even something small.  
But do it with truth.

## **Crossings Without Return**

Halfway through the journey,  
some things touched me gently.  
Others hit me hard.  
Some came with emotion, others with contradiction.  
Because the more India unfolded in front of me,  
the more clearly, I saw its many different faces.  
And how people within it can be invisible yet vivid. Present. Unavoidable.  
In the next step, I don't think I'll just see beauty.  
I feel I'll see a chasm.  
And I will try...  
not to look away.

## **Scents of Courtesy and the Coal of Life**

Today we find ourselves in the wealthy neighborhoods.  
Not far from the slums, where garbage and dirt stand out.  
Here, everything is different.  
A well-dressed hostess welcomes us into her beautiful garden home.  
We will cook together and share a meal — to experience Indian hospitality.  
A different world. A beautiful experience. A new acquaintance.  
The educated and gracious lady guides us through the secrets of spices and  
Indian cooking.  
Together we make halva, moussaka, and of course, curry.  
Maybe the world is smaller than we think.  
Maybe what connects us is greater than what divides us.

As we say our goodbyes, taking souvenir photos and making promises to meet again — promises we probably won't keep —  
just outside her house, another woman — perhaps of the same age — irons clothes at a makeshift, movable stall, using an old coal-powered iron.  
The clothes belong to the ladies of the neighborhood.  
They wear them.  
She presses them.  
In the same neighborhood.  
In the same country.  
In an entirely different world.

## **Ganesh No Longer Smiles**

We ascend by jeep to the Amber Fort.  
The road winds through a small, picturesque town.  
We laugh, chat, take pictures.  
The fortress walls are impressive.  
As soon as we arrive, we barely step out before being surrounded by street vendors.  
Umbrellas, hats, drums, keychains.  
Things we don't really need — but for them, it's a means of survival.  
Bargaining, persistence, pressure.  
We learn that the only way to be left alone is to ignore them.  
*And for the first time, I ignore a human being with such indifference.*  
*And for the first time, I see a human being insist so deeply.*  
Maybe they have no other choice.  
Maybe they are desperate...

We move towards the fort.  
There, a small group of elephants waits.  
Their foreheads painted, heavy seats strapped on, their handlers organizing  
the tourist rides.  
I look at them. Huge, majestic — yet utterly exhausted.  
As if they've forgotten what it's like to live without orders.  
They look like slaves.  
Not violent slaves plotting an escape — but weary beings, abandoned by  
hope.  
I wait for some signal in their eyes. A call for help.  
But there's nothing. Only a silent acceptance.  
And then I remember: **Ganesh**, the elephant-headed god, is one of India's  
most beloved deities.  
A symbol of wisdom, fortune, and remover of obstacles.  
A god worshiped daily — yet his living image, the real animal, is worn down  
and mistreated.  
How can something sacred carry such suffering?  
Why do we all exploit animals for our pleasure?  
Is survival enough of a justification?  
Or have we simply learned... to look the other way?

## **At the Monkey Temple – Instincts and Choices**

Along the way, we stopped to visit the Monkey Temple.  
Impressive temples, perched on the cliffs — sacred animals alongside them.  
Awe, fear, and hunger. All gathered in the same space.  
All species struggling to survive. Humans included.  
The monkeys... captivate me. Their movements, their reactions.  
They seem to behave almost like humans.  
Science tells us we share a common DNA — that we are their "evolution."  
But the word "evolution" feels relative when you look them in the eyes.  
What, really, is the difference between a monkey snatching food from an  
unsuspecting tourist's hand  
and a human being grabbing what he needs,  
using far more violence than survival demands?  
The only difference that comes to mind is this:  
A human knows.  
Or at least, has the ability to know.  
We can choose to survive with violence — or without it.  
And that choice...  
is what sets us apart.  
Or exposes us.

## The Journey Continues!

The airplane takes off.

My body sinks into the seat — tired, heavily loaded with images, noises, scents, and thoughts.

Around me, silence.

A kind of silence that comes only when there's nothing more to say.

It's the moment in between.

The space for thought and reflection.

I'm no longer in India, but I haven't yet returned home either.

I belong to that gap between journeys and return.

I close my eyes.

Not to sleep — but to remember.

The images flow by:

a smile on the street,

the gaze of a child without a family,

a silent elephant,

a woman ironing clothes on the sidewalk,

a plate of curry shared as a gesture of acceptance.

I touched the heat, the dust, the noise — but also the silence that weighs heavier than words.

In India, I didn't just enter temples and homes.

I stepped into everyday moments where I didn't always know how to stand.

Into smiles that hide pain, into the eyes of children who ask for nothing but give you so much.

I realized that contrasts aren't the problem.

The problem is when you stop seeing them.

Or when you learn to endure them without feeling disturbed.

I don't know how to describe this journey.  
I don't know if I truly understood India.  
But what I do know is that I didn't come back the same.  
I didn't just bring home souvenirs.  
I carried with me glances, voices, silences, and questions.  
What is the difference between a monkey that grabs to eat,  
and a human who grabs with more violence than necessary?  
How many of us see the contradictions and keep moving?  
How many learn to ignore them?  
And how many choose to carry them within — not as a burden, but as a  
reminder?  
India doesn't offer itself to you.  
It challenges you to stand present,  
to not look away,  
to choose what you will carry with you when you leave.  
It doesn't say "thank you."  
It throws its truth at your feet and walks away.  
And you — what will you do with that truth?  
Will you tuck it away at the back of your mind like a tourist?  
Or will you let it change the way you see?  
Maybe, in the end, the purpose of any journey is not to see something new,  
but to learn to see yourself differently.  
And if that happens...  
then you have truly returned full —  
even if your bags are empty.  
Namaste...